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SERMON CCCV.

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MEANS OF THE WORLD'S CONVERSION.

After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord."—Jeremiah, 31 : 33, 34.

The happy period predicted in this passage has been the desire and the expectation of the church in every age. It has been the burden of prophecy and of prayer. Thousands of the noblest spirits that ever walked the earth, as they beheld this consummation in distant prospect, have kindled into rapture; and to hasten its approach, have tasked their utmost energies. The delay of this wished-for redemption of the world has ever been a subject of the church's lamentation. As we look backward over her history, we see her, in every period, prostrate before God, and crying, "Let thy kingdom come;" while a long line of patriarchs, prophets and saints, moving in sad procession, lift their tearful eyes, and stretch out their supplicating hands, saying, "Why do thy chariot-wheels so long delay?"

Who is there among us, having any sympathy with Christ, that has not shared in this feeling and uttered this cry? How is it possible for a Christian to look out upon the world—to contemplate our race grovelling in sensuality, and ravening with malevolence, until earth groans with suffering and heaven weeps in pity—and not pray that the days of darkness may be shortened? Who has not often inquired with inexpressible desire for some more expeditious mode of evangelizing the earth? Who has not asked, if there be not in the resources of Omnipotence some more potent means than have ever yet been employed, to bring men back to God?

Such passages of inspiration as our text, are adapted to quiet our impatient solicitude, not only by furnishing an assurance of the ultimate accomplishment of our highest hopes, but also by intimating the *mode* in which God's wisdom will operate to produce the glorious result.

It is proposed, in this discourse, to consider the following questions:

By what INSTRUMENT will the renovation of the world be effected? and, *How will that instrument be APPLIED?*

I. Let us inquire what *instrument* will be employed to bring about the blessed condition of the human family predicted in the text.

This instrument is *Divine truth*, most expressively called in the text, *knowledge of the Lord*: that is, the exhibition of the *Divine character*, more than any other truth, before all consciences, is to be the mighty engine by which Heaven will work out the moral revolution of the world.

Do any, at first view, imagine that this is a means too simple to accomplish so vast a result? But what is it "to know the Lord?" or rather, what is it not? All moral truth, every conceivable motive to goodness, is involved in knowing him—in a *true* idea of the holy Lord God. Let us illustrate this. We all know how we are awed by the presence of even a good man. The personal aspect of one who walks with God, whom we know to be greater and better than ourselves, has a power to restrain us from sin. Who, for example, could stand without solemnity before Isaiah, or Paul, or John; or beneath the venerable sanctity of their gaze, would be likely to harbor thoughts of sin? When angels

were accustomed to visit the earth, the Scriptures tell us that those whom they addressed were sore afraid, and fell to the ground, overpowered by the awful dignity of holiness. It was the impression of their immeasurable *moral superiority*—the august and venerable presence of unspotted *purity*, that made sinful men to shrink abashed, and hide their faces in the dust. And thus, when, in former ages, Jehovah came down in visible manifestations of himself to men, the sense of his holiness flashed conviction to the very heart. Thus Job declared, "I have *heard* of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now *mine eye seeth thee*; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." The same result was produced by the exhibition of the Divine glory to Isaiah. "Wo is me," he exclaims, "for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips!" What was it, that thus, all at once, overwhelmed the prophet with a sense of his own and his people's vileness? It was because he had just seen the "glory of the Lord, high and lifted up, and his train" that "filled the temple." So, whenever God comes near to men's consciences, by any outward providence or inward impression, he makes himself to be seen as the antagonist of sin. Hence, to know the Lord—to have the true conception of the **REAL GOD**—is the most perfect law which a man can have before his conscience. What is the moral law itself, but God's character—a catalogue of his perfections, written out in the form of precepts? The soul that knows what God is, sees intuitively what itself ought to be. He has only, then, to present *himself*, as he is, for ever before the mental view, in order to keep men under perpetual admonition of right and wrong. This is one cause why heaven is such a holy place. And the reason why all systems of heathenism, and all schemes of merely human philosophy are unable to produce goodness in men, is that they present distorted or defective views of the Divine character. Think of the Jupiter of the Romans, and the Vishnu of the Hindoos; contrast their moral attributes with the Jehovah of the Bible, and you are at no loss to account for the degradation of their votaries. You see at once why Paganism is a system of wretchedness, even for the life that now is; and why Christianity restrains and blesses even those whom it does not convert, by continually holding up before them

at least some dim portraiture of the true God. The power of the Divine character and example, as a persuasive to virtue and preventive of sin, is immeasurably great. Such a conception as that of a perfect, Almighty Being—the upholder and governor of all things—is the grandest of which the mind is capable. The idea of a *present* God—a *real, living, all-knowing, all-pervading Spirit*—having an infinite aversion to sin and love of goodness—is a thought that bows down the soul in utter abasement, and sways over it an infinite authority. In proportion to the clearness with which this idea is apprehended by men, are they brought under the control of moral motives. The Pagan, for example, has only the feeblest conceptions of God's character; hence his feelings are wrong, and his worship unacceptable and debasing. He changes the glory of the incorruptible God into a lie, and therefore feels from it no impulses towards a life of holiness. The sinner in a christian land comes somewhat nearer the truth; he drops the notion of a *material* God, so that he does not bow down to stocks and stones. Still, God, as a *holy God*, he does not like to retain in his knowledge. He turns away from the thought of him—he says in his heart, “No God! no God!”—he buries himself in the world—he drugs his conscience with every opiate—he drowns the voice of truth in the din of business or the shout of mirth—he shuts his eyes against that which may be known of God, lest the light of the knowledge of the Divine glory should shine into his heart.

It is therefore with a most beautiful propriety that the Scriptures use the phrase, “knowledge of the Lord,” as a comprehensive term for all truth and goodness. To know him, is to know his character, his government, his rights, his claims on us, and our duties to him. It is to know his plan of mercy, his Son, and his Spirit—his pardoning and sanctifying grace. And when the world is full of this knowledge, then God will be seen by every man standing right before him, and the beauty of his character will have such infinite authority over the conscience, that all souls will form themselves, and all their operations, according to this model ever present before them. Well, then, is it written, “Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord.”

II. Let us now ask, secondly, By what *methods and agency* is this grand instrument to be *applied* to the renovation of the world? *How* is this knowledge of the Lord to be spread all over the earth, and to be brought in contact with every human heart?

In reply to this deeply interesting inquiry, we remark, that the Holy Scriptures, all along throughout the whole line of promise and prophecy, speak in such a way as to imply two different and distinct eras under the new dispensation: and they very plainly teach, that the truth will be spread in a different manner in each of these eras. One of these is spoken of as coming *after* a certain state of things. Thus in the text: "*After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts,*" &c. When the period thus indicated shall arrive, we are taught to expect a larger measure of the Divine influence—a measure quite above and beyond that which now accompanies the preaching of the Gospel. This special influence will probably differ in degree rather than in kind from that which is ordinarily enjoyed. It will act more directly and more efficiently on the hearts of men. It will not be independent of all use of means, but there will be in it so much of God—the effects will be so speedy and so great, that means will be comparatively unobservable. Thus, in the text, this great moral revolution is ascribed to an immediate agency of God himself. Saith the Lord, "I will PUT MY LAW in their inward parts, and WRITE IT in their hearts." Other expressions, denoting sovereign acts of the Deity, are also employed; such as "pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh." "He shall come down," says the Psalmist, "like rain on the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth." "Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven." Nothing can exceed the richness of the promises respecting the majesty and prosperity of God's kingdom in that day. The Lord declares that he will "say to the north, give up, and to the south, keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth." "Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert." All obstacles will be removed. "Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and the glory

of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." "The Lord will come with a strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him." "The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sighing and sorrow shall flee away." "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and all nations shall flow unto it." There shall no longer be occasion for men to teach every one his neighbor and his brother, saying, "Know the Lord, for all shall know him, from the least of them to the greatest of them."

Such, then, is the way in which the knowledge of the Lord will be diffused in the latter day. God will by his providence and Spirit, with amazing rapidity and grandeur, accomplish the renovation of the world. We know not how soon this happy period shall arrive, but come it surely will. The day is on the wing when the empire of sin in this world shall be overthrown, and the crash of its fall shall reverberate afar through the dominions of God.

But ere that time arrive, there is another era—an era in which the truth is to be spread mainly through the instrumentality of the church. It is in *this* period that we are placed. The time has not yet come in which God will specially interpose for the immediate triumph of holiness. He observes, and requires his people to observe, an established connection between means and ends. For all the good he will bestow, "he will be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them," They shall reap only as they sow. If they desire his kingdom to come, they must deny themselves and labor for that object. If they wish men to be saved, they must place truth before them, and press its claims upon the conscience. The language of the text teaches this: "In that day, saith the Lord, they shall teach *no longer* every man his brother." &c. Observe, it shall *then* be *no longer* needful—implying that *till* then it *is* needful to *teach* men, individually, to know the Lord. Here, then, we have the mode in which God wills that the great instrumentality for converting the world shall now be applied: it is by the direct efforts of his people to spread the truth. He might, indeed, take the work out of our hands: he could, by a sovereign and immediate pro-

cess, cause the glorious result to spring forth at once, perfect and complete. But he has great and gracious reasons for the delay. He has, by a most beautiful and blessed arrangement, linked our agency into the chain of causes which he employs, on purpose to educate us in holiness. By throwing upon his people the responsibility to care, and labor, and pray, he brings out their love, their self-denial, their confidence in himself. Did he not admit our co-operation, but, by a direct influence, himself perform this work, how should we ever exercise some of the choicest graces of the christian character? How could we sympathize with the Redeemer in his tears and sufferings for a dying world? What occasion would there be for our sacrifices and self-denial? Where would be the faith that now trusts in him, even in the dark—that hopes against hope, and labors on amid circumstances the most adverse? What demand would there be for submission, where there were no trials; for courage, where there were no foes; for perseverance, where there were no obstacles? Besides, the character of God is to be illustrated by a long series of developments. His great mind is not in haste, as are the minds of men, to leap to the end of his work. He can afford to wait for the slowly revolving course of ages to disclose his plans, and establish all their destined results. And when this is done, then shall the end come. When successive dispensations shall have fully brought out, one by one, his matchless attributes, and written in living light on the scroll of heaven each great principle of his government, then the lingering years of delay shall cease. Then God will no longer hold back his mighty hand from fulfilling the desires of his mighty love. He will come forth from his pavilion, where he has for ages hidden his power; he will make bare his arm, and apply the energies of his omnipotence to the work of making all things new.

But for the present, the command of God leaves this great work in the hands of his people. "Go teach all nations;" "Go preach the Gospel;" "How shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach except they be sent?" In this stage of the church's history, at least, it is evidently the Divine arrangement, that men shall be themselves the instruments of saving their own race.

And here we notice the great hindrance to the world's conversion. While men hold the right *theory* as to the church's agency in saving sinners, they *practice* as if no such agency existed, and devolve the work upon the providence of God alone. The prevailing feeling is one which removes the responsibility from individual consciences, and throws it upon some agency distant from ourselves. We know that this is said to be an age which magnifies human instruments, and delights in a visible activity. Grant it; but still this spirit shows itself in speculation, rather than in actual effort. It expends itself in magnificent *schemes*—in laying large plans, which promise mighty consequences, rather than in faithful labor as individuals. The men who will co-operate zealously in some splendid enterprise that promises a large result, think they can do nothing in some plain, obvious work, that lies over against their own doors. So then, even if there be a tendency in the age to *rely* too much on human agency, we see no tendency to *put forth* too much agency in individual labors. We see no such thing as a community of men, *each* of whom is weighed down with a sense of *personal* responsibilities. Grand operations, that promise grand results, do indeed find enough to embark in them, because they fire the imagination. But those duties which a man is to do alone—which rest upon him though all other men should stand aloof, have few attractions, and receive little attention. And what we now need for the conversion of the world is, that each Christian should irradiate his *own sphere* with the light of holiness; and next, that he should teach—each particular man should teach, his neighbor and his brother. Then would every neighborhood and every fraternity of men know the Lord, from the least even to the greatest.

Let us give an illustration. During the prevalence of the cholera, in Ireland, in 1832, when the utmost apprehension prevailed in every cabin, some ecclesiastic is said to have devised the following expedient to quiet the fears of the people: A piece of burning turf was exhibited on a certain occasion, said to have been lighted by fire from heaven: pieces of it were given to the people, with the injunction, that each man should go to his own house, and kindle his fire with this sacred turf: and they were assured that as long as

this fire was perpetuated, the pestilence should not come nigh their dwellings. But, one condition of this sacred gift, was, that every man, after lighting his own hearth, should carry a piece of the fire to his neighbor. And thus, in an incredibly short space of time, it spread from house to house, and from hamlet to hamlet, over the whole district. Now, what was in this case a mere imposture, is, in the case of the Gospel, a reality. The truth of God, received by the soul, is an infallible preventive of the fatal tendencies of sin; and it is given to us on the condition that we distribute it to others. We must "teach every man his neighbor and every man his brother." "The Spirit and the bride say, come; and let *him that heareth say, come.*"

That this is the way to do a great work, we learn from the analogies of the natural world. How are the coral isles of the ocean made? Not by being upheaved by some grand convulsion from the bosom of the deep; but by the ceaseless labors of little insects, each of which works in its own place, and adds its mite to the accumulated mass. It stops not to form combinations and lay plans, but labors on in its sphere. How is the huge globe watered and made productive? Not by great seas, but by little streams, or rather by single drops of rain and dew, each refreshing a single leaf or blade of grass. How is bread produced for the millions of mankind? Each stalk of corn becomes responsible for a limited number of grains. And in the moral world we see results produced in the same way. How is it that vice is propagated? How are drunkards, gamblers and infidels made? Not by wholesale, but by individual contact. One corrupt heart infects some other heart; one polluted soul taints some other soul with the infection of its own depravity; and thus recruits are ever multiplied for the host of Satan. Let it be so in the work of salvation. Let each Christian labor to rescue his neighbor and his brother, and how soon will the world be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. According to this Divine arrangement, philanthropy ceases to be an ambitious reaching after things beyond our sphere, and addresses itself to the first object it meets. The Christian looks around upon his own family, and says, "*This* is my starting point: here I begin *my* share of the work of converting the world. This companion,

these children, these associates, demand my first regard, because God brings their condition first before my conscience, and places them most directly under my influence. If I cannot let my light so shine as to guide *them* to heaven, how shall I be a light to those that are afar off? If I am unfaithful in that which is least, how can I be faithful in much?" Could a man never make his influence felt beyond a single individual, and that one the *humblest child*; still, there is infinite propriety in his addressing himself at once, and with all earnestness, to the work of saving that child from ruin. There is a moral beauty in it, and a benefit to himself, independent of any other result.

Nor will such benevolence be restricted to its own immediate circle. A genuine concern for the salvation of *one* soul is of the nature of the most enlarged philanthropy. Thus it has ever been. The men who have done the greatest good in the world, and most command our veneration for the sublimity of their benevolence, have begun their career of well-doing by blessing their own immediate circle. Some of our most devoted missionaries, were first missionaries in their own families and in their own villages. Thus it was with Martyn, and Brainerd, and Gordon Hall. This was the spirit of Harlan Page. Thus it has been with some beloved living examples. Ere they went abroad to foreign fields, they were living epistles among us, known and read of every one with whom they came in contact. Whether in the ministry or not, the history of their lives is this: "Warning every man, and teaching every man, night and day, with tears." And so, too, the Saviour of the world, in his own exemplification of the workings of love, "went about doing good," seizing every opportunity to teach *individuals*, as well as the multitude: the fishermen of Galilee, as really as the throngs of the temple—a woman by the well of Samaria, as truly as his great congregation on the mount—received his Divine instructions.

This, then, is what must abound ere the world will be converted—*personal holiness* as the vital principle—*personal labor* as the mode of effort—and *individual persons* as the subjects. We must depend less on plans, and betake ourselves to deeds. We should not wait for the millenium to burst upon the world in some distant land, but each one must labor to make a millenium around himself. Let

every individual do this, and create about himself a circle of light; let these circles become so numerous as to meet and blend their radiance, and the whole horizon will be at once illumined. O, let the imagination dwell for a moment on the glorious idea! Let us suppose each of the children of God thus coming up to his individual duties to his own soul, and to his neighbor's. He walks through the world with the light of heaven on his brow, and its love and peace in his heart. He trusts in the Lord too firmly to be cast down in gloom. He is so happy in God, that the only tears he sheds are those of compassion for dying souls. He lives so much in converse with heaven, that his very raiment savors of Paradise, and men take knowledge of him that he hath been with Jesus. His presence is a rebuke to sin, and his life an unanswerable argument in favor of religion. Infidelity cannot live where he is, nor a quiet conscience dwell in the sinner's breast. Without waiting for the stimulus of any combined effort, his own abounding love incites him to seek the salvation of men; and he goes to work immediately, and on the spot, to do all the good he may; and continues to do it. Thus he is always prepared to unite with others in every proper species of *associated* action—to carry out, on a large scale, the holy principles which he has cherished into maturity in his own private sphere. Now, imagine this same spirit to be general—that whole churches—yea, the common brotherhood of disciples on the earth—were such as this; and no foe of Zion, nor combination of foes, in or out of the pit, could retard her career of conquest. Soon the tide of victory would roll over oceans and continents, surging against every mountain, and pouring through every valley the triumphal song, "The kingdom, and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, is given to the people of the saints of the Most High."

From this subject we learn,—

1. The true remedy for all our social and political evils. Although our country is still young among the nations of the earth, she has made rapid strides in sin; and already voices prophetic of wo begin to be heard in the distance. The simple manners, the integrity, temperance, and contentment which become private life, are giving way to pride, luxury, and the lust of gain. Instead of inviolate public faith, we have political chican-

nery. Patriots are becoming few, and demagogues numerous. The awful sanctions of law are losing their hold on the popular mind. Justice and judgment, instead of being regarded as things of eternal fixedness, are degenerating into matters of fluctuating expediency, that may be bought and sold. Error in opinion and corruption in practice spread rapidly, and find ready advocates; while truth and virtue are opposed at every step. And these evils are only outward symptoms of a disease that is deeply seated in the body of society. And what is the remedy? How shall our beloved country be delivered from the ruin that impends? *By spreading the knowledge of the Lord.* We must teach every man his neighbor and every man his brother. Every Christian must bring the power of the character and law of God to bear upon some one or more consciences. We must hold up the great and glorious attributes of Jehovah before men, till they become a *law* unto them, written in the very heart; till the internal authority and force of love will not permit the oppressor to grind the face of the poor, nor the assassin to lie in wait for blood, nor the magistrate to sell judgment for bribes. Then, private friendship, truth and righteousness, and public faith, and the majesty of law will reign in our land; the Sabbath will be honored; the Holy Spirit will dwell among us; God will be our God, and we shall be his people.

2. We also learn the excellence of those methods of doing good which exercise the conscience on questions of personal duty. Those forms of benevolent action accord best with the Divine will, which employ individuals in laboring for the salvation of specific subjects; which combine the living heart, and eye, and voice of a Christian to compass the rescue of some particular soul from hell. Hence the excellence of all those forms of effort in which teaching is employed. The mother amid her children,—the teacher of a Sabbath-school or Bible-class,—the faithful distributor of Tracts,—and, pre-eminently, the pastor and the missionary,—are thus engaged. All these may indeed fail; they often do fail, by aiming at no specific results, but dealing only in vague generalities. But if they do justice to their opportunities, and if they aim at distinct objects, and seize each particular occasion to benefit individual souls; under God, they will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the service of the Lord.

3. Finally, this subject illustrates the mode in which revivals of religion may be promoted. It is not—as some are apt to feel—by any particular set of measures. It is not by the zeal or eloquence of preachers merely. Ministers have their place, and a place, too, pre-eminently honorable among the agents for saving men. But they must also have the co-operation of the individual members of the church. Without this they labor in vain, or at best with only a partial effect. A revival that shall penetrate the *mass* of the community, must be carried into it by the *living agents* who are accustomed to mingle *with* the mass, and who will go hither and thither, attaching themselves to individuals. A military commander, without soldiers, could not subdue a hostile country by means of plans and general orders, or by the prowess of his single sword. Nor can a minister expect to be the means of extensive and permanent good, if unaided by the prayers and co-operation of his people, acting each in his personal and separate capacity, as well as in concert with others. We may see, then, why we have hitherto accomplished so little for our Master, and how we may hereafter effectually serve him in the conversion of men. Henceforth, let our course be the simple plan, not to wait for others, but each one do the *first good thing that offers*,—and then the next—and the next; and thus proceed, filling up our lives with a succession of individual acts of usefulness. O, brethren, our vows to Christ were separate and individual vows of personal devotion; and at the judgment-day, the account we shall render will not be a *general account*, handed in by churches or societies; but “every one shall give account of HIMSELF to God,” and shall receive, each for himself, an individual reward or condemnation.

SERMON CCCVI.

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"LIVING AND WALKING IN THE SPIRIT."

"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."
Galatians, 5:25.

This passage is addressed to the people of God. It contains an exhortation founded on one of those great doctrines of the Bible, which the people of God all believe, and which the most holy and favored of his people always find delightful to their souls. It is a truth clear and unquestionable as any in the Bible, that the children of God become such by the adopting power of the Holy Ghost. They are begotten of God; they are *born* into his holy family, *not of blood*, nor of the *will of man*, nor of the *will of the flesh*, but of God. God himself is their Father. From that degradation and helplessness of spiritual death in which they were plunged God has lifted them up. From that course of prodigal profligacy in which they had wandered he has called them back. The spirit of fear has been exchanged for the spirit of love; and their recovering, adopting, forgiving Lord has removed the ruling power of worldly aims, to give supremacy and permanence to those aims which go out after the high birth-right of the sons of God. Recognizing this idea, as fixed in the minds of those to whom he was writing, the apostle founds upon it the proposal, *let us also walk in the Spirit*. If we are, indeed, of that number who *live by the Spirit*,—who, from being *dead in trespasses and sins*, have been made *alive unto God* by the Spirit,—let us *walk by the same Spirit*: let us have our whole conduct consistent with a christian's existence, with a christian's duties, with a christian's calling, and with a christian's joys and aims.

My brethren, all your hopes for the future, and both the felicities and the infelicities of the past, will conspire for the enforcement of the exhortation.

You hope, after you have done with this world, to go to a better one. We are *saved by hope*, says the Apostle: and both the duty and the privilege of the believer call you to be *able*, through Divine grace, to hope for perfect and eternal joys in heaven. But you hope to attain them, not in negligence, not by inaction, not by merely waiting the flow of some rapid stream, which shall bear you onward to that blissful ocean whose surface is never ruffled by angry storms, and whose dashing billows never excite fear or create danger. No, no! As wise believers, you are sensible that heaven is a *prize*, and not an accident; that you are to attain it by *fighting the good fight*; by going on, from field to field of christian mastery, till your feet shall tread upon the pavements of the celestial city. Wise hope never promises *any thing*, but as she points with fixed finger, to the way, and the walk, and the warfare of the sons of God. Only as you *walk by the Spirit* you expect to reach the home of saints, the *city of the New Jerusalem*.

Of the same tendency is your felicitous remembrance of the past. The greatest happiness which you are able to gather by any remembrance of days that are gone, is found in the evidence that you have made some progress in the Divine life, and thus done something to glorify God. But *how* have you made it? You must have made little indeed, if you do not know that it has been by no power of your own; that at every step God has helped you on; and that, aside from Divine aid, you would now be as distant from the home and country of the blessed as the most wayward prodigal that wanders on the fields of sin. Yes, if you have entered into the way to heaven, and made any considerable progress in it, you are fully sensible that you have gained the victory over sin, baffled the adversary, kept the world under foot, held sweet and holy communion with God, only when you have *walked in the Spirit*.

The happy experiences of the christian are a fund of instruction. They contain many a lesson rich in Divine wisdom, and pleasant for the believer's meditation. But they contain no lesson so plain as this; that every item of happy experience has come from walk-

ing with God. It is when you have *walked in the Spirit*, that the *candle of the Lord has shone upon your tabernacle*, darkness has vanished, and your soul has been cheered with the presence of God and the light of life. It is when you have *walked in the Spirit*, that fear has departed, affliction has lost her sting, sin has failed of its enchantment, and you felt that you were happy because, through grace, you were God's. You could thank him for your joys, you could submit and not murmur, if he removed them: resting on him, you could exclaim, *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want; he maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters; he restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*

Your *want* of felicity, too, as christians, admonishes you that nothing has so much diminished your joys as the want of a close and constant walk with God. Oh! It is when you have forsaken him that he has forsaken you! You failed to *walk in the Spirit*, and then you failed of the *joys of your salvation*. If you have ever been so unhappy as to find your christian comforts few; as to find your light dimmed; your heart sad; your fears prevailing over faith; and your soul sinking in the deep waters; you found it so only at those unhappy periods when you failed to walk in the Spirit. Your very mourning showed this: oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon my head, and when, by his light, I walked through darkness. The exhortation of the text, therefore, is enforced by your hopes, and happiness, and fears.

By *the Spirit* in the text is meant none other than the Holy Ghost, the third person in the adorable Trinity. It is by his efficiency that the hearts of men are renewed. Before that efficiency is exercised they are *dead*, according to the language of the Scriptures; —they are dead in sin, dead to holiness, dead in law, and dead to every qualification for the joys of holiness and heaven. But when the sanctifying power of the Spirit is exerted, they are made *alive*. They are alive, because delivered from the curse of the law; they are alive in holiness; they are alive, because they are quickened by the Spirit of God; they are alive by that kind of vitality which marks all the members of the family of God, and qualifies saints and angels for the joys around his throne. It is not by the powers of our fallen nature, that they are alive; it is not

by the energies of conscience, by the leadings of understanding, nor by the strong promptings, even, of that hope, which would grasp possessions more permanent than the unsubstantial pleasures of this world. They live by the *Spirit*, if they live at all as christians. God has *quickened* them. They are *created anew* in Christ Jesus.

On this principle the apostle then appeals to their consistency. *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit*: if we are indeed of that number who have any right to think themselves christians, let us *live* as christians: if we *possess* a spiritual existence, let us maintain a spiritual walk; let us live as children of light, and not of darkness. This is the nature of the exhortation.

But it is not of unaided human nature to do so. *Nevertheless I live, yet not I*, is the inspired account of spiritual life. If we *live*, it must be *in the Spirit*; if we show the signs of life, or discharge the offices of life, or gain the benefits of life, if we *walk*, it must be *in the Spirit*.

But this exhortation would be greatly inappropriate, were the Spirit communicated without any reference to our endeavors or desires. In that case we should have only to wait and to receive; action and anxiety would be alike in vain. The Spirit, however, by which growth in holiness is secured, and without which nothing of importance in religion is ever accomplished, is not so communicated to believers. There is a temper and conduct calculated to invite his presence; and there is a temper and conduct calculated to invite his departure.

That we may be able to obtain comfort and growth as believers; that, by the presence of the Divine Spirit with us, we may *walk in the Spirit*; let us see how we may be most likely to secure his continued presence.

I. If we would have much of the presence of the Spirit, we must *value* it highly.

It is true, God sometimes grants his spiritual presence where it has been little or none at all desired. In the first act of sanctification in the renewal of the soul, and perhaps sometimes in the recovery of his backslidden people, he acts without great reference to the previous estimation in which he was held. But surely he does not **ABIDE** with those with whom he is an unwelcome guest.

Where he is not desired, he does not dwell. The Holy Spirit does not stay in the heart that does not want him. And if the people of God would have much of the Divine presence, they must learn to value the Divine presence. Heavenly blessings will descend in most liberal measure, where they are most coveted, and sought, and prized. Heaven, indeed, is rich in mercy; and it is the principle of free, divine, unmerited benignity in God, by which are regulated the communications of his grace. But Jehovah guards his majesty. It is worthy of him to do so. And he will withdraw from that people who do not value his presence;—whose estimations of heart are such, as to do great dishonor to the majesty of God. Let the hearts of God's people set a high value upon God's presence; let them learn to estimate it as they ought; let them prize it above all price, *coveting earnestly the best gifts*; and they may hope God will be with them—will *abide* with them—will be their *pillar of cloud* and their *pillar of fire*. But let them value lightly the Spirit; let them repose the hopes of their heart on something else; let them forget their need of Divine aid; let their affections go out, habitually and most strongly and readily, after other joys than those of holiness and heaven; and then the Spirit will depart,—darkness will rest upon the door of the tabernacle,—the Comforter will go away from the *temple of God*!—*Know ye not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost*? Do ye forget, that when the Saviour was about to ascend into heaven, the consolation that he left for his weeping disciples was, *It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I depart, I will send the Spirit unto you*? Heed ye not the fact, that the *Spirit seals us to the day of redemption*? Are you unmindful that we *know we are of God, by the Spirit which he hath given us*?—that we know not *what to pray for as we ought*, but *when the Spirit itself* (in our hearts) *maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered*? Are you unmindful that it is the *Spirit*, which is to *lead you into all truth*,—to *help your infirmities*,—to *take of the things which are Christ's, and show them unto you*? How is it, then, that there can be any undervaluings of his presence? Let us only remember the magnitude of his offices, and we shall be furnished with demonstrations enough that there is nothing else which we ought more eagerly to desire, more highly to prize, more prayerfully and constantly to seek. It is the Spirit which

disperses the darkness of spiritual ignorance, subdues the obstinacy of sin, melts down the hardness of the heart, and opens it to the Saviour. It is the Spirit which *teaches our hands to war and our fingers to fight*; marks us as the children of God; enables us to resist evil, and gives us the victory over self and sin. It is the Spirit which teaches us to relish holiness: he kindles our desires for God; he furnishes us a foretaste of the joys of heaven; and being given to us an account of Christ the Son, he communicates all the blessings of redemption, and reconciles us to the Father. It is the Spirit which joins us to Christ, and makes us one with him. By the Spirit we repent; by the Spirit we believe; by the Spirit we love, and hope, and rejoice. By the aid of the Spirit we make our soul's everlasting covenant with God. The Spirit is God himself, communicating to a lost world the purchased blessings of the redeeming Son of God!

Abundant, therefore, are the grounds for prizing above all price, and desiring with the whole heart, the presence of the Holy Spirit. And every church and every believer may rest assured, that, if they would have much of the presence of the Spirit, and thus, *walk by the Spirit*, they must highly prize and greatly desire the presence of the Spirit with them.

2. If we would have the aids of the Spirit in our christian walk, we must be sensible of our *need* of it. Few persons who profess to know any thing of religion will hesitate to acknowledge their dependence upon Divine aid. But assent of the understanding is one thing, and sensibility in the heart is quite another. That is no sensibility of heart which consists in a mere knowledge of fact. Few persons are so ignorant of what the Scriptures teach, as not to know that we are dependent upon the Holy Spirit to aid and strengthen us for the production of any thing that is good. But still this mere knowledge is not all we need. The *heart* needs to *feel* it. The soul needs to have it, as one of its deepest sensibilities. A fact forced upon the understanding, and at the same time not welcomed by the heart, produces in us no proper homage to heaven. Feeble worms like us ought to possess the most deep-seated consciousness of our insufficiency. Our necessity should be a sentiment of the heart. It should be felt as the most certain truth; it should be familiar as the most common principle; it should be realized as belonging to the very nature of our hearts

and of our religion, that we are able to take no step in holiness but by the Spirit of God. Without this we shall not render the proper homage nor the proper honor to God. Without this we shall not sufficiently distrust ourselves. Without this we shall not be free from those assailings of pride and creature sufficiency which tend, most of all things, to keep the Spirit of God out of the heart. Feel your need, brethren, if you would find your helper. Realize your dependence; love your dependence. Love to realize it. Many a believer fails, even in proper attempts and duties, for want of this. He resembles the warrior clothed in armor that does not fit him. He resembles the aroused but mistaken judge in Israel, robbed of his strength: *I will go out, as at other times before, and shake myself, while he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.*

3. In order to enjoy the presence of the Spirit, we must have *faith* to believe in the *free communication* of it, as well as to depend upon its holy efficiency. It needs no argument to show, that the human mind will not depend on that which is regarded as beyond its reach and its expectation. We need faith in God; faith to believe the promise; faith to rely upon its fulfilment. We ought to have such ideas of the veracity of God, and the goodness of God, and the communicativeness of God, mingled with such ideas of our own weakness and want of sin, that, like Abraham, we shall not *stagger at the promise*; and that, like Paul, we can say, *when I am weak, then am I strong*. The veracity of God is pledged to the fulfilment of the promises. The goodness of God is as infinite as his power, and is exercised in bestowing. There is a readiness in the Holy Ghost to come and to dwell with true believers. And it is for these reasons that we are exhorted to be *strong in the Lord*, to *walk in the Spirit*, to be *filled with the Spirit*. Such expressions make it manifest, that God would have our faith embrace the idea of free communications of the Spirit; and would have us know that sovereign grace has established a connection between our depending faith and the communications of the Holy Ghost. We are bound to be *strong in the Lord*, because the Lord is ready to impart strength to those who in faith rely in him. We are bound to be *filled with the Spirit*, because in the careful use of the appointed means of grace faith should expect to be filled, and shall not expect in vain. We are bound to *walk in the Spirit*, be-

cause the Spirit is ready to impart to every traveller to eternity both wisdom and strength *to walk and not be weary*, whilst journeying towards that better land. In few things do men more offend God, than in their want of faith in his blessed promises. It is this want which makes them shrink from recorded duty. It is this want which leads them to substitute something else in the place of the Divine command. It is this want which often brings up expediency, and manufactures it into a rule of life; which covers over and hides the very command of God; and because the command seems difficult, leads to that rebellion which is *as the sin of witchcraft, and to that stubbornness which is as iniquity and idolatry*. Let us believe the promises. Let us depend on God to fulfil them. Let us be diligent in the service of God, yielding ourselves, without reserve, to all his commands. Let us go where he points, discharging *duty* in fear and in faith, and leaving results to him. And then, and not till then, we may hope for his favorable, his forgiving, his strengthening presence. That unbelief which questions his promise, and therefore hesitates at his requirement, or neglects his invitations, is a great offence against the veracity of the Most High God.

4. If we would experience much of the Divine Spirit, we must be careful to maintain a *temper of mind suited* to his presence. The Scriptures make it evident, that the Holy Spirit may be *grieved* away from the hearts of his people. *They rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit, therefore he was turned to be their enemy*. There are a thousand feelings which rise in the hearts of men, which are opposed and offensive to the Spirit of God: and if they are cherished and indulged,—indeed, if they are not resisted, and baffled, and subdued, the continuance of the Spirit with them is not to be expected. There are *passions which war against the soul*; there are gratifications of worldliness and vanity; there are scenes and societies of ungodliness which must be forsaken by the people of God, or the Spirit will not dwell with them. The hateful, the turbulent, the petulant, the proud, the impatient, the ungente, the unforgiving; those whose minds are easily angered, and agitated, and ruffled, need not expect much of the presence of that Spirit whose fruit is *love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance*. Those who indulge in irascible and malignant feelings, who cherish bitterness, and enmity, and ill-will,

need not expect the presence of that Spirit who admonishes, *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.* Those immoderately attached to earthly possessions, and not seeking *first the kingdom of God*, may expect that Spirit will leave them whose influence would lead them to love heavenly things more than earthly. It is the object of the Holy Spirit to lift us above the world. In his sacred visitations he would prepare us for heaven. His influence is exerted to form us for sacred communion with God; for sweet, and habitual, and holy converse with spiritual and eternal things. *Things seen and temporal*, occupying and controlling us, shut him out of the heart. With *things unseen and eternal* he would fit us to commune. In sacred sobriety, in wise and holy thoughtfulness, in self-possession and devotion to God and to heavenly interests we must live, if we would *walk in the Spirit*, enjoying his presence, and his power, and his sacred comfortings.

5. If we would be aided in our christian walk by the power of the Spirit, we must be carefully and deeply sensible to his *monitions*. It is not enough that we aim to combat and conquer sin. It is not enough that we attend to the duties of piety, and use the appointed means of grace. It is not enough that we endeavor to resist the fascinations of worldly pleasure, and those temptations which would lead us to lay up our treasures on the earth. There is something beyond this. There is a *still small voice* to which we must lend our attentive ear. Christians are not to be taken to heaven in a path they are unwilling to tread. They are not to expect that God will always so admonish them that nothing but the most hardened impiety and unbelief can resist. Sinai does not always thunder. Calvary does not always quake. Not to every incredulous Thomas will the Saviour say, *Bring hither thy finger and thrust it into my side.* No, far from this. There are monitions of the Spirit most wonderfully gentle, and tender, and still. God speaks to the heart in that small voice which agitates no feeling, troubles no composure, and is only the gentlest indication to the adopted child. Let him hear it, let him heed it. If he will not keep his heart fearfully sensible to the calls of God, his God may be offended and call no more.

As you speak to your children in gentleness, tenderness, lowness, and solemnity of voice, when you speak to them of the

things which most deeply interest your soul; so God the Holy Ghost speaks to you. The Christian is not to be *forced* and driven in his path. God only calls him to it, and leads him in it. He must yield himself to the gentlest influence. Not by violence, but by judgment, by choice, by affection he proceeds in the way to heaven. There are times when the Spirit moves on his heart; and if he remains insensible to his influence, the breathings of the Spirit may be gone, and the soul be left to the poisoned breezes of worldliness and sin! Let Christians become habitually watchful for Divine influence; let them cultivate a sacred sensibility to it; let them be fearful of losing the least influence which the Eternal Sanctifier ever exerts on the mind, on the conscience, or on the softened and sanctified sensibilities of the heart; and I am persuaded they will walk more closely and more sweetly with God;—sin will less trouble them; they will live in the light of heaven; they will have joy in God their Saviour; and then revivals of religion will continue longer;—indeed, I solemnly believe they would never cease.

6. If we would have the aids of the Spirit, we must *seek* them by constant and fervent *prayer*. Divine sovereignty has chosen to connect the benefaction with the petition that seeks it. *Ask, and ye shall receive*, is the promise that encourages prayer. And in reference to no other gift is the promise of God so full, so clear, so broad, as in reference to this. *The Holy Spirit to them THAT ASK HIM*, is the blessed measure of his blessed bounty. The willingness of the father to give bread to the hungry child, is the measure of God's readiness to bestow the Spirit. He gives with the hand and the heart of a father. Here only there is no limit flung around desire. When we pray for any thing else, *submission* must qualify anxiety;—*not as I will, but as thou wilt*. But, praying for the Holy Spirit, *IMPORTUNITY* is our best submission to God; *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me*.

My brethren, these are some of the things needful for your securing the presence and the aids of the Divine Spirit in your walk along the way of the christian life. They show you,

1. There is no safety in religious indifference and sloth. Your security, as Christians, countenances no indifference. The best gifts of heaven are to be sought with a holy fervor and a heavenly appetite.

2. They show you that the excellency of religion, the honor of its Author, and the desirableness of its possession, will be estimated very much as you demean yourselves before the world. *Ye are the temples of the Holy Ghost.* God dwells in you. God acts in you. Your unfaithfulness is his dishonor and the scandal of the cross! What caution, what sanctity, what careful separation from sin, and what reserve for God should mark your daily course!

3. These truths show you the importance of improving those seasons when the evils of sin are felt, and the weakness of the flesh, and the worthlessness of the world, and when death and eternity come up as present to your view. They are the seasons when God dwells in his temple. The Holy Ghost is then moving on your hearts, to lead you, by truth, from sin to holiness, and separate you unto God.

4. These truths show you, that there is no offence to God in your being dissatisfied under the absence of his Spirit. He would have you mourn; he would have you seek him by tears, and lamentations, and prayer, and give him no rest till he return. If you feel any longings after God, indulge them, cherish them, and never be satisfied till he comes *to dwell in you, and walk in you, and be your God.* In holy prayer give no limit to yourselves. Launch forth on the ocean of the Divine perfections and promises. Ask any thing that is necessary to holiness. God is as much glorified in giving, as you are blessed in receiving his sanctifying gifts. Heaven is all bounty to the heart longing for its benefactions.